

Remarks of Maria Manso-Garcia
Spanish teacher, Trumbull
Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Maria Manso-Garcia. I am a Spanish teacher at Trumbull High School, Connecticut. I am writing to you with regard to the new legislation that our governor is trying to pass.

My teaching experience comes from very different perspectives. I went to school in Spain. I worked as a Spanish high school teacher in England one year at a very prestigious high school for girls. I came to this country as part of the visiting teachers partnership between Spain and Connecticut in 2001. Here I have had the opportunity to work in Bridgeport and now in Trumbull, so, I have experienced many different “worlds” in education.

I understand that we need to fix what is wrong in our public schools, and we need to do the best we can for our future citizens, our students. However some of the measures and changes we are facing with this new bill will have a negative effect on both teachers and students. I strongly believe that teachers should NOT EVER be evaluated by one person or administrator. In my 12 years experience, I have been a witness to many cases of bad administrative skills and biased evaluations or performances based on peoples’ connections or relationship. I have seen teachers moved to other, better paid positions, not because they are outstanding teachers, but because of their connections to some administrators.

Evaluation, let alone a person’s salary, should never be based on one person’s judgment,. Was the governor elected or moved up by one person’s evaluation? The system needs a better way of evaluating a teacher based on different points or facts, not a one-person evaluation that may be biased.

Also, the commissioner should never be the head of all of the districts' BOEs. Each district is different, as is its population. Again, we cannot have such a complex group of people's interests (one whole district) under one hat, the commissioner. District BOEs are formed by its citizens, who know better the strengths and weaknesses of their district and they should be responsible for their BOE changes or matters.

The teachers are the standing and hardworking force every day, and they know better what their needs are as far as **professional development** is concerned. They should be the ones stating what they need for their professional growth, and not a private company or outsource facility.

Education is and should be in the public interest. This is not a private company run by CEOs that make money talking about politics while their workers lose their jobs or get poorly unpaid. Why don't we try to fix what we have instead of getting these new ideas that are not accommodating to the problems we have right now? Did Governor Malloy get such an education that it impeded him from becoming the man that he is now?

Let's fix what we have, giving voice to the people who do their jobs everyday, our teachers and their representatives at the CEA. Let's be honest, education is a PUBLIC business and should be run democratically, not by a CEO who oversees education from above and not from the inside, as teachers do EVERY DAY.

This is the reason why we should take into account the hard, mature and knowledgeable work by the CEA, a group of educators who know what the best is for our students and their teachers. They represent the good teachers and try to promote respect for this hard profession in these tough times.

Last year I had to deal with some bureaucratic idiosyncrasies with the SDE. It was not until I contacted one of the CEA staff members, Linette Branham, that I was able to resolve a situation that had been a clear case of neglect created by the red tape at SDE. All of these red-tape "professionals" were difficult to contact and would only follow the

bureaucratic process without acknowledging any personal situation or helping in the process. We teachers apply our differentiated instruction everyday in our classroom. SDE should get some training on these differentiated cases skills.

We need people who know about teaching, who know about the lengthy road that takes us to teaching, who know about the intricate process to become and stay a good teacher, to lead us and to represent us in meaningful education reform. Teachers and CEA know how to make the research based and feasible changes in education.

Thank you so much!